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# THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT



# Hot Rod





If there's a line, he'll cross it; if there's a knot, he'll cut it; if there's a risk, he'll take it... smiling. In his solitary world, there's no room for second thoughts, no margin for error. "Out there" is a permanent state of mind, and the more impossible, downright insane the mission, the better this daredevil AUTOBOT likes it. His name...

... IS HOT ROD.



## THE TRANSFORMERS: SPOTLIGHT **HOT ROD**

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Special thanks to Hasbro's Aaron Archer, Elizabeth Griffin, and Richard Zambrazano for their invaluable assistance.

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INEVITABLY, SOMEONE  
ALWAYS SAYS, "HOT ROD,  
IT CAN'T BE DONE."

IN THIS CASE...



...THERE'S NO WAY I SHOULD BE  
ABLE TO MAKE IT DOWN TO THE  
SURFACE OF THIS PARTICULAR  
MOON WITHOUT BEING DETECTED  
AND SHOT OUT OF THE SKY!



BUT IN MY BOOK, THERE'S  
NO "CAN'T BE DONE."  
THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY...

AND THE MORE  
DOWNRIGHT INSANE  
IT SEEMS...



...THE LESS ANYONE  
WILL BE EXPECTING IT!





LEAVING MY "RIDE" TO IMPACT ON THE  
SURFACE, I *FREEFALL*, ALL BUT THE  
MOST ESSENTIAL SYSTEMS OFFLINE.  
JUST ANOTHER BIT OF SPACE DEBRIS.

I'M OUT ON MY OWN, UP  
AGAINST *IMPOSSIBLE*  
ODDS, MY LIFE—AND MY  
LIFE ALONE—ON THE LINE.

IT'S A RUSH!



NO WAY TO KNOW WHERE THE  
SENSOR BUFFER BEGINS AND  
ENDS, SO I LEAVE IT TO THE  
LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT...



...TO POWER UP  
AND GENERATE  
THE NULL FIELD.



EVEN SO...

...IT'S A FAR FROM  
GENTLE LANDING.



I FLIRT WITH *CRITICAL* SYSTEM-SHOCK,  
DIPPING IN AND OUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

I TRY TO *FOCUS*...  
ON THE MISSION,  
ON THE OBJECTIVE,  
BUT INSTEAD...



I SLIP...



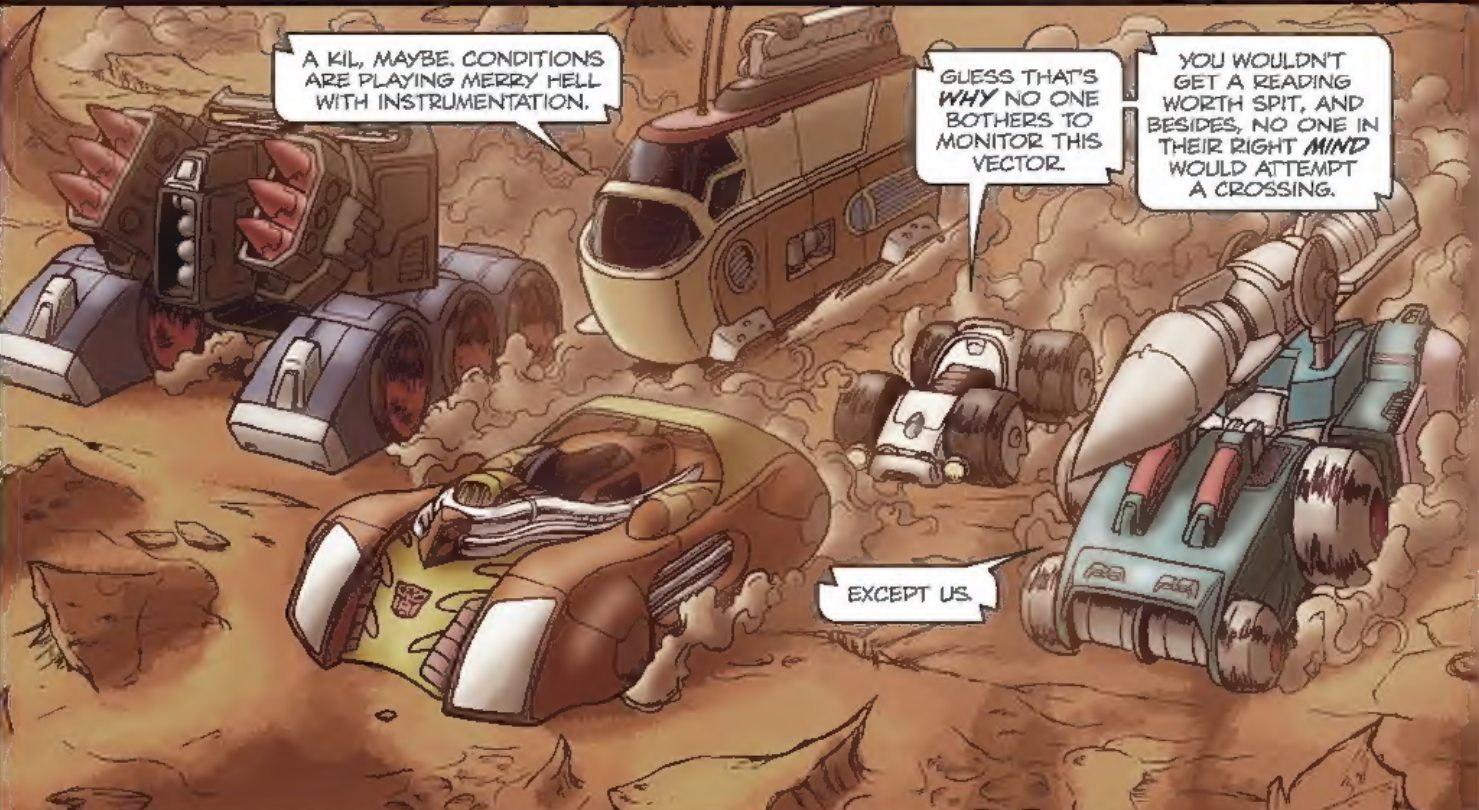


...ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE SILICON STEPPES OF KI-ALETA.

MY FIRST TIME IN OVERALL CHARGE OF A TACTICAL UNIT, MY *ONE* FAILURE. I'VE RE-LIVED IT, IN GRINDING STOP-MOTION, A *THOUSAND* TIMES.

WELCOME TO ONE THOUSAND AND *ONE*...

DISTANCE?




A KIL, MAYBE. CONDITIONS ARE PLAYING MERRY HELL WITH INSTRUMENTATION.

GUESS THAT'S *WHY* NO ONE BOTHERS TO MONITOR THIS VECTOR.

YOU WOULDN'T GET A READING WORTH SPIT, AND BESIDES, NO ONE IN THEIR RIGHT *MIND* WOULD ATTEMPT A CROSSING.


EXCEPT US.



HOLD IT! I THINK...

YES.

GO TO VOICE-COMM. WE'RE *HERE*.



UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, THIS IS THE OUTER PERIMETER...



...OF THE OMEGA BUNKER.

RIGHT. BORE  
DRONES ONE AND  
TWO ARE IN  
POSITION. LET'S  
GO TO WORK...

GIZMO?

I'LL HAVE THE **HOLOMATTER  
PROJECTOR** UP AND RUNNING IN JUST  
A FEW NANO-KLIKS. STAND BY...

BACKBEAT?

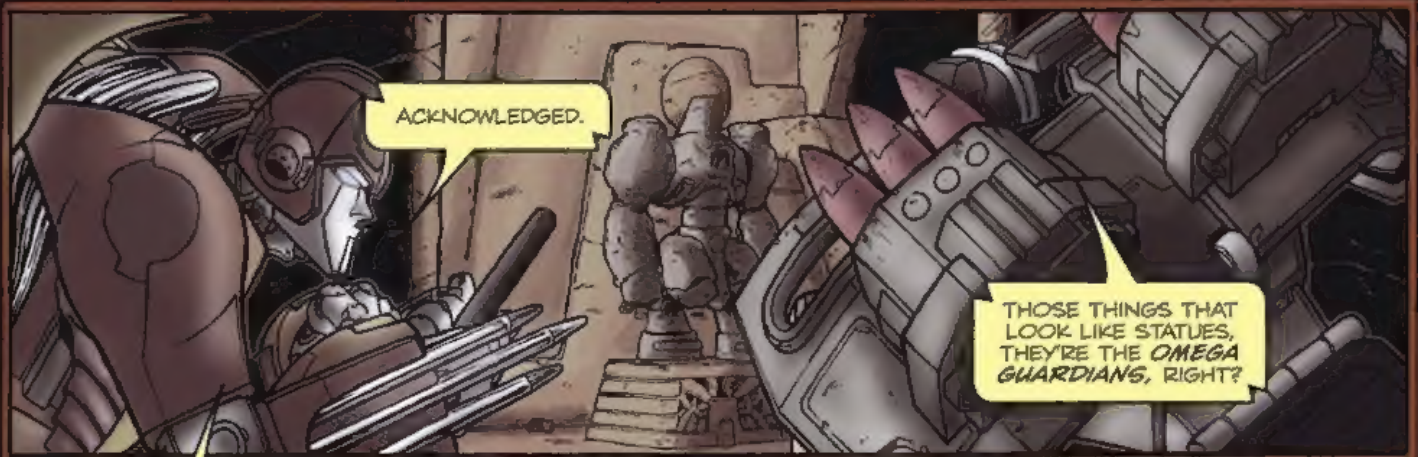
SETTING LOW-  
YIELD **CHARGES**.  
TIMERS ARE SYNCH  
WITH GIZMO'S  
HOLOPROGRAM.

DEALER?

**DROPSHIP**  
UPLINK ALIGNED  
AND LOCKED.

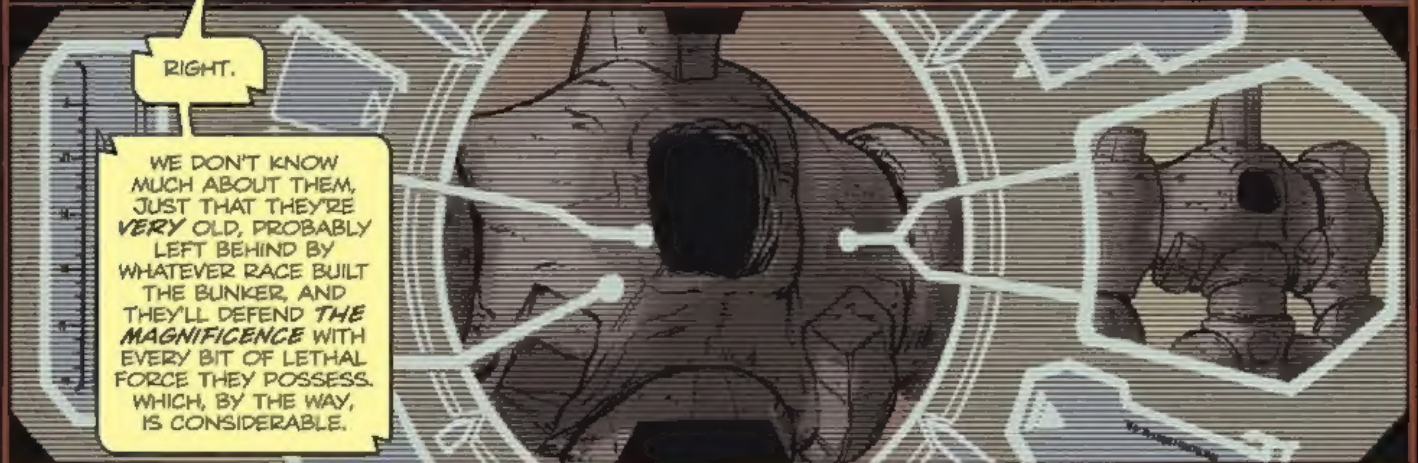
HAVE BORE  
DRONE THREE  
LOCK ONTO MY  
POSITION AND  
BACKTRACK.





ACKNOWLEDGED.

THOSE THINGS THAT  
LOOK LIKE STATUES,  
THEY'RE THE *OMEGA*  
GUARDIANS, RIGHT?



RIGHT.

WE DON'T KNOW  
MUCH ABOUT THEM,  
JUST THAT THEY'RE  
*VERY* OLD, PROBABLY  
LEFT BEHIND BY  
WHATEVER RACE BUILT  
THE BUNKER, AND  
THEY'LL DEFEND *THE*  
*MAGNIFICENCE* WITH  
EVERY BIT OF LETHAL  
FORCE THEY POSSESS.  
WHICH, BY THE WAY,  
IS CONSIDERABLE.



THE TRICK,  
THEREFORE, IS TO  
GET THIS DONE  
*CLEAN*, IN AND  
OUT WITHOUT A  
FIREFIGHT.

OKAY...



...IT'S *SHOWTIME!*

I WAS SO FULL OF  
ZEAL, GUNG-HO TO THE  
*MAX*. I WONDER...

...IF THAT'S WHAT  
GOT THEM *KILLED*.

SLOWLY, SURELY,  
THE PAST RECEDES,  
PRESENT—AND  
*PRESSING*—  
CONCERNS COMING  
INTO FOCUS.





GETTING DOWN HERE, WAS—RELATIVELY  
SPEAKING—THE EASY PART. NOW...

...I HAVE TO GET IN.

STYX. OF ALL THE DECEPTICON  
PENAL COLONIES, THIS IS THE  
HARSHEST, THE MOST PUNISHING.  
LIFE EXPECTANCY IS *NOT* HIGH.

IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE  
IMPREGNABLE. WHICH,  
AS IT HAPPENS, IS JUST  
ONE OF MANY WORDS...

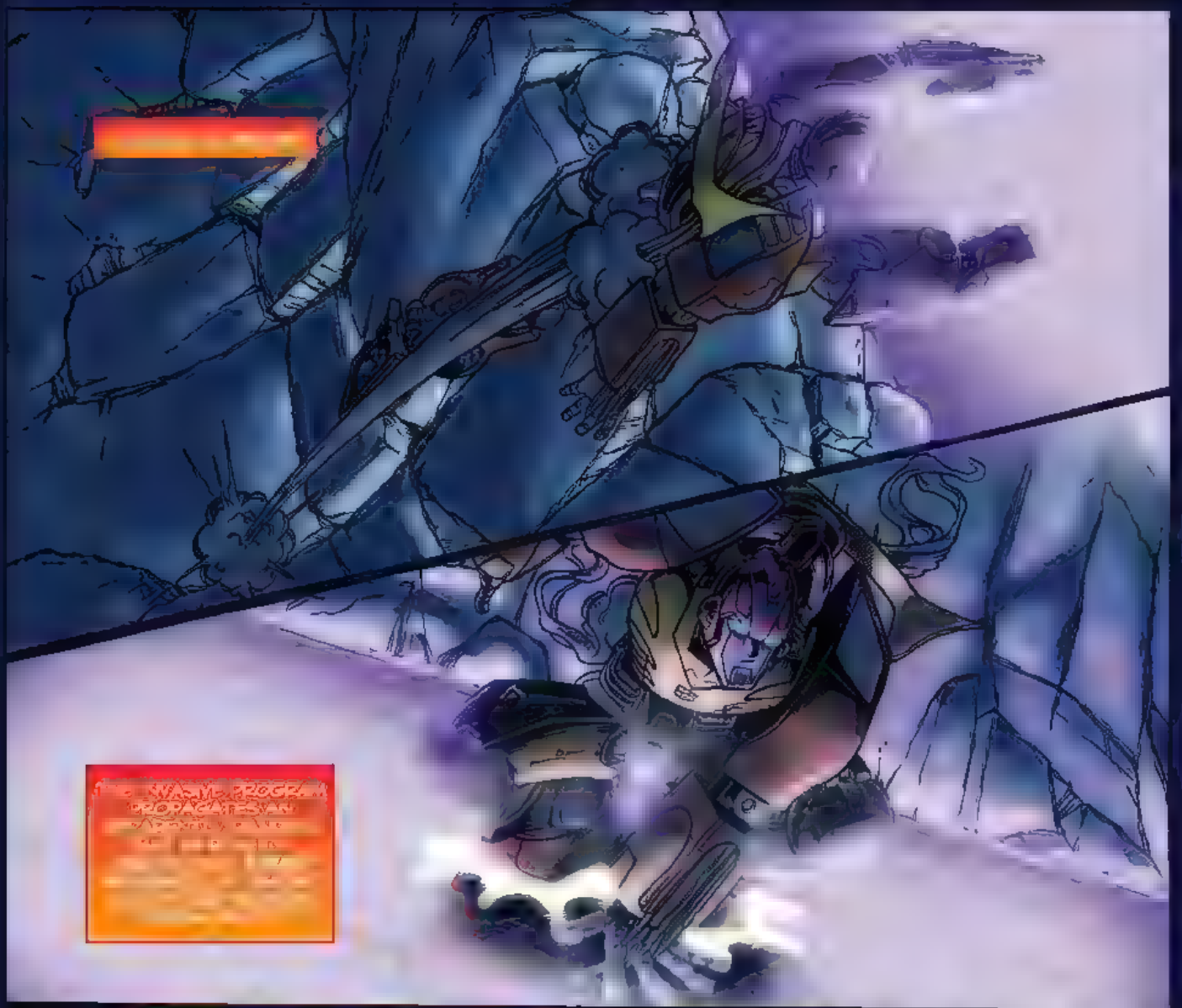
...*NOT* IN MY  
VOCABULARY.







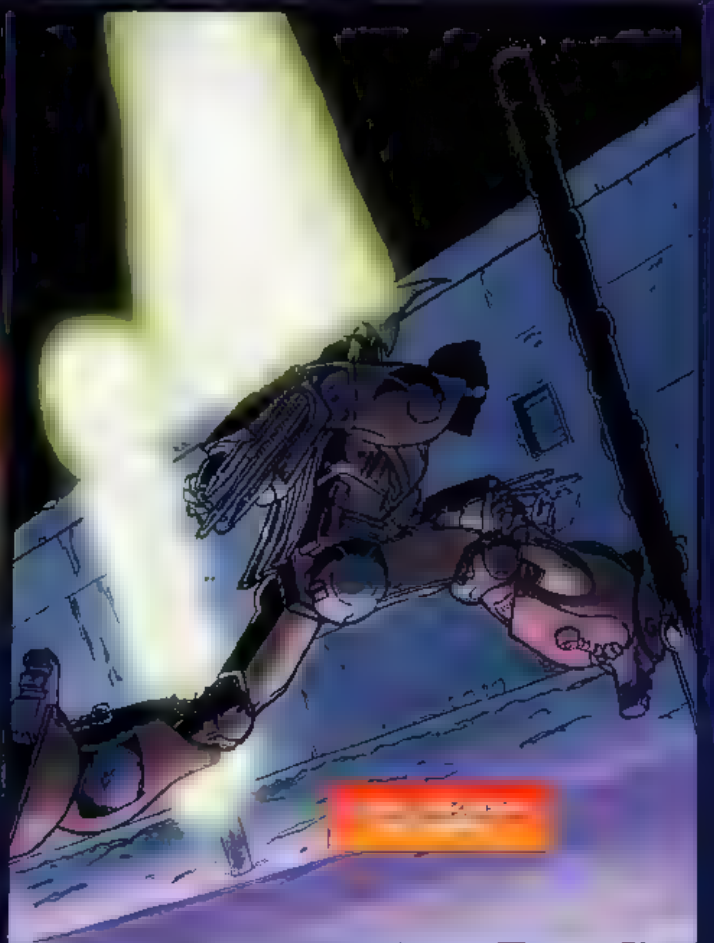




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PRO PACATISSAN  
APRIL 10, 2006  
10:00 AM  
10:00 AM

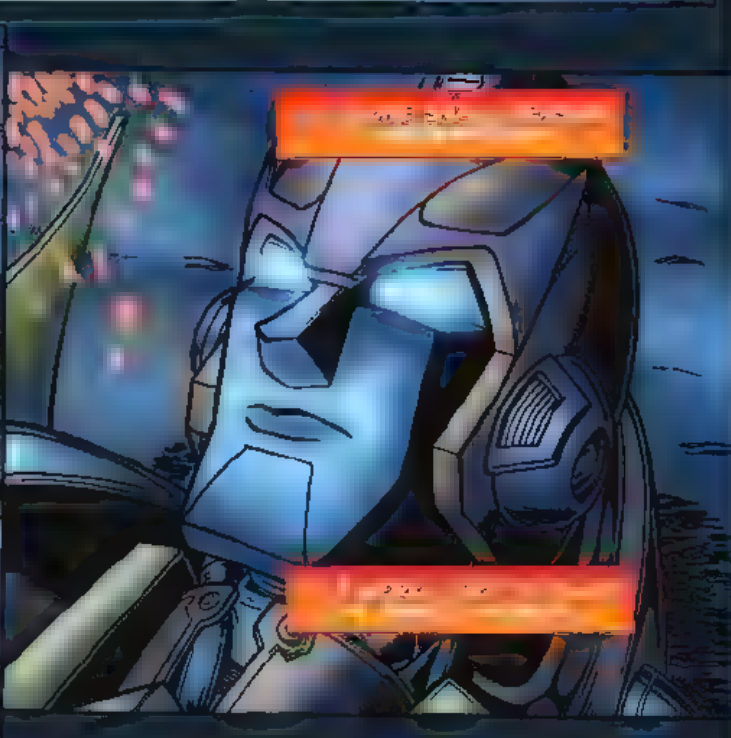
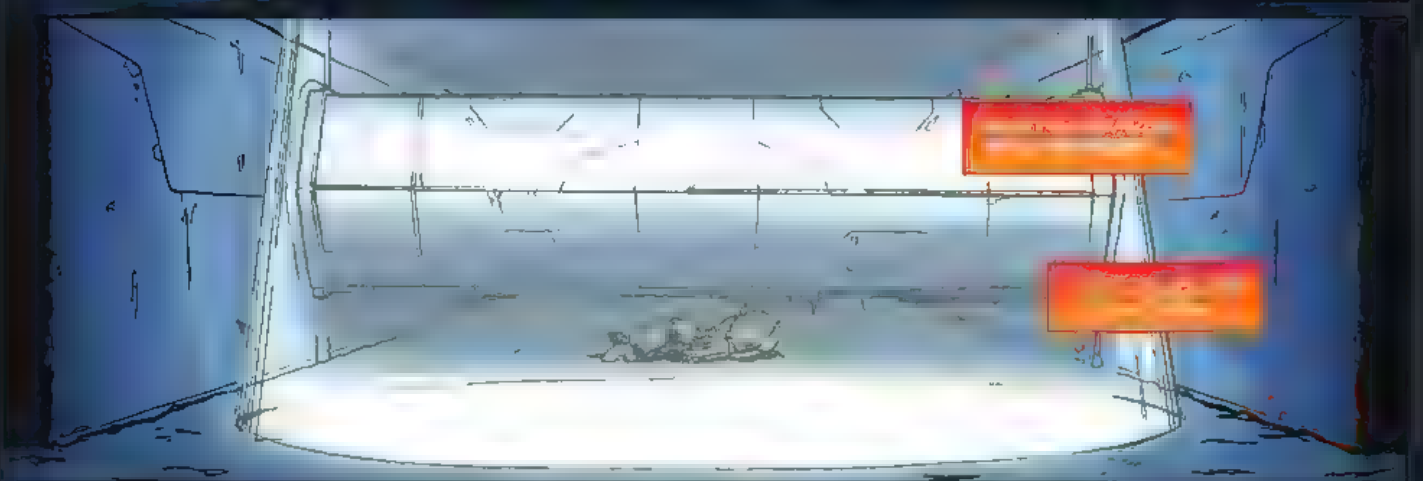
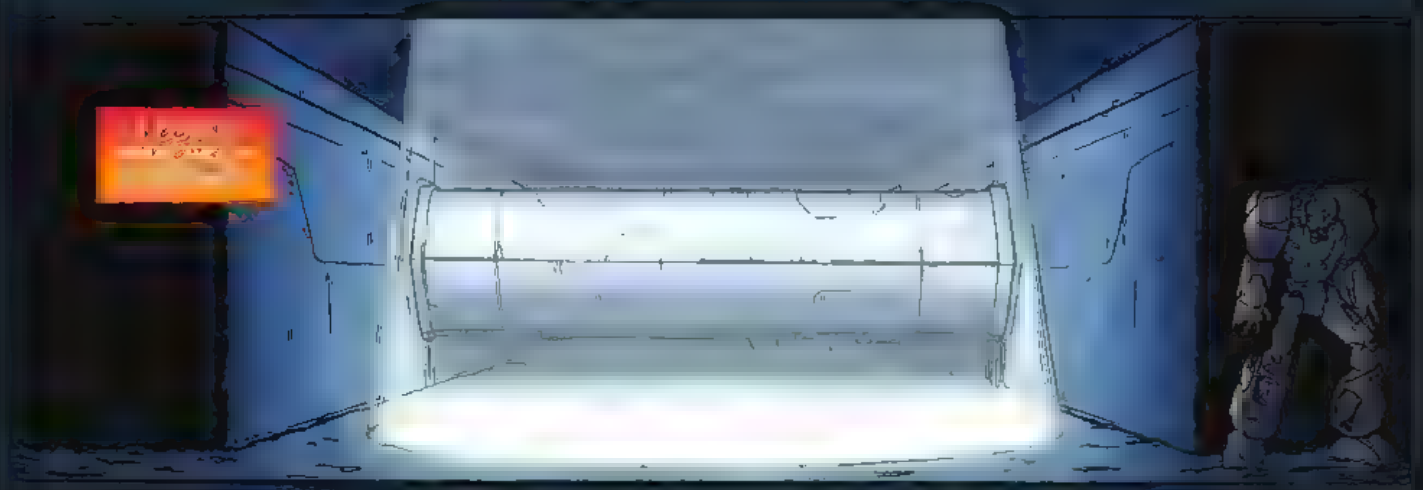


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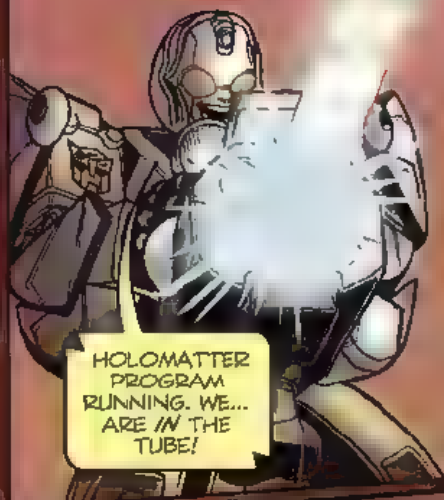


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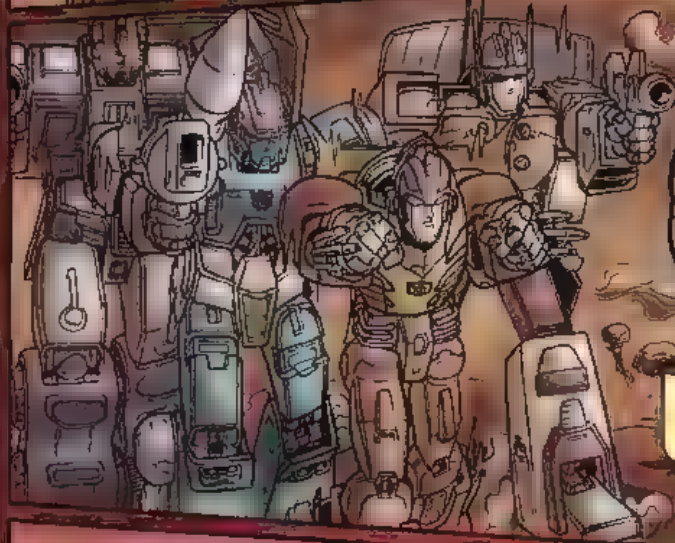


HOLOMATTER  
PROGRAM  
RUNNING. WE...  
ARE IN THE  
TUBE!

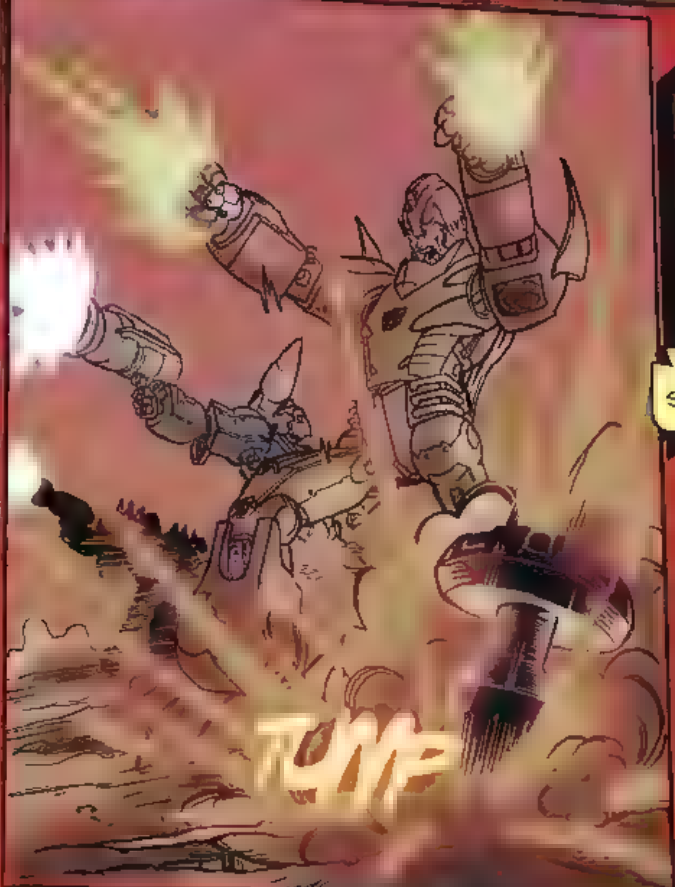


SOME OF US  
MORE LITERALLY  
THAN OTHERS.

THE GUARDIANS?



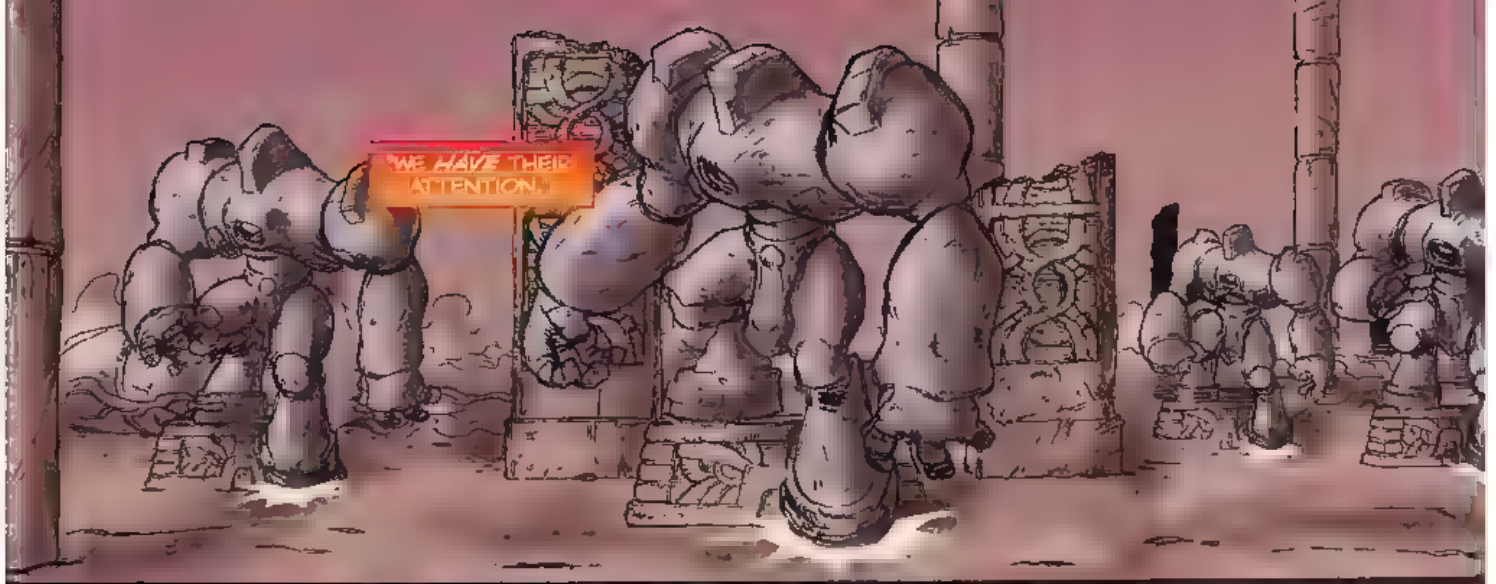
SO FAR SO UNMOVED. LET'S  
SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN, IN  
ADDITION TO SIMULCRUMS...



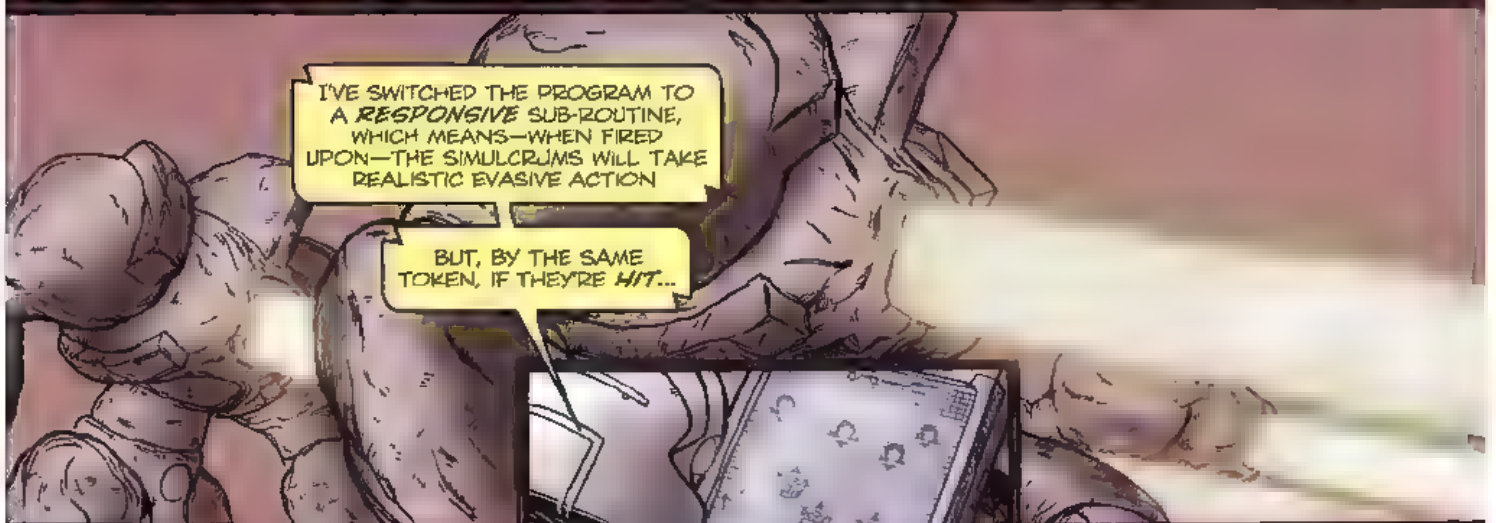
...WE THROW IN  
SOME FIREWORKS!







WE HAVE THEIR  
ATTENTION.

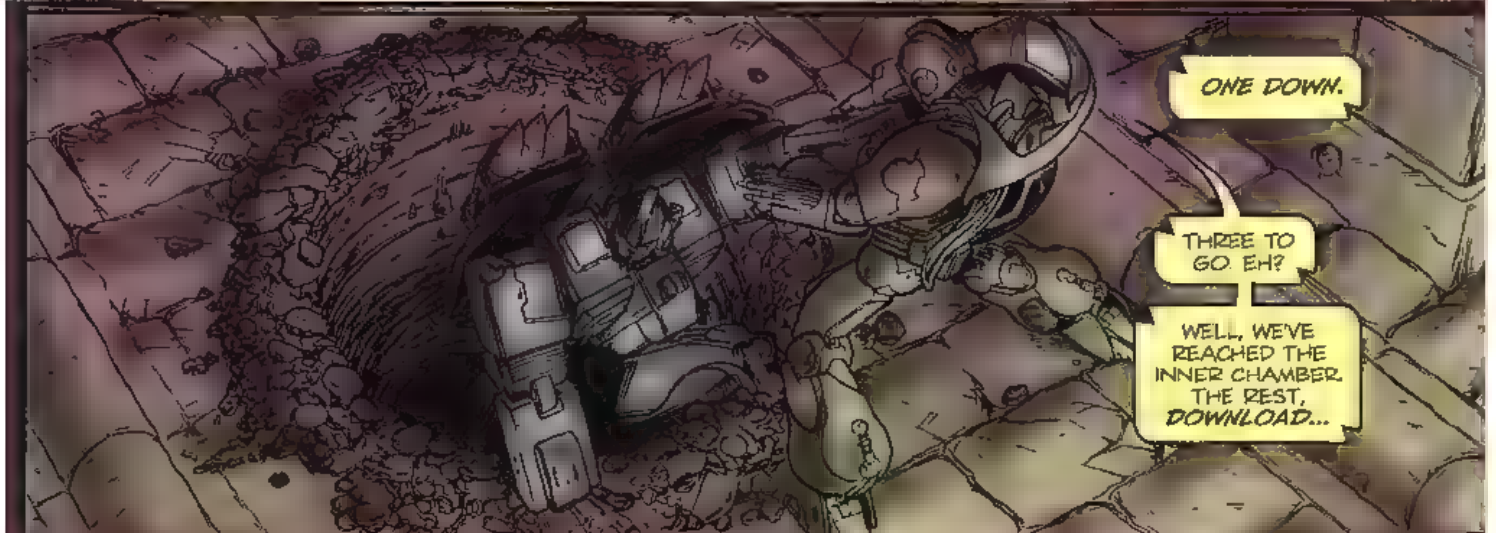
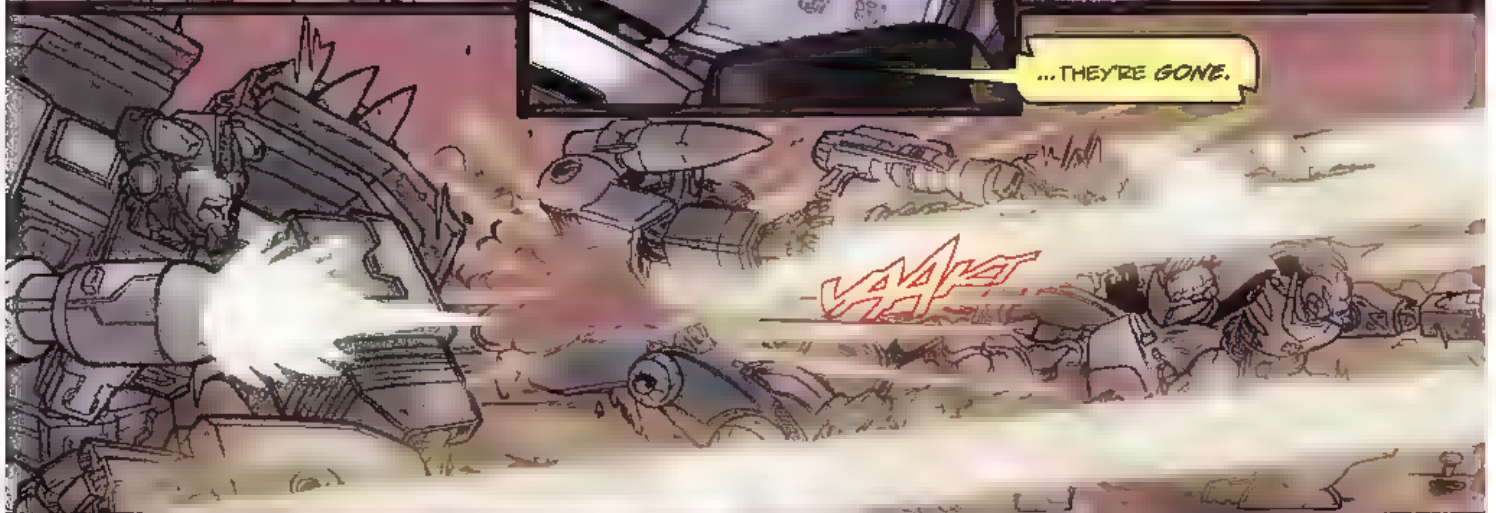


I'VE SWITCHED THE PROGRAM TO  
A *RESPONSIVE* SUB-ROUTINE,  
WHICH MEANS—WHEN FIRED  
UPON—THE SIMULCRUMS WILL TAKE  
REALISTIC EVASIVE ACTION

BUT, BY THE SAME  
TOKEN, IF THEY'RE *HIT*...



...THEY'RE GONE.



ONE DOWN.

THREE TO  
GO, EH?

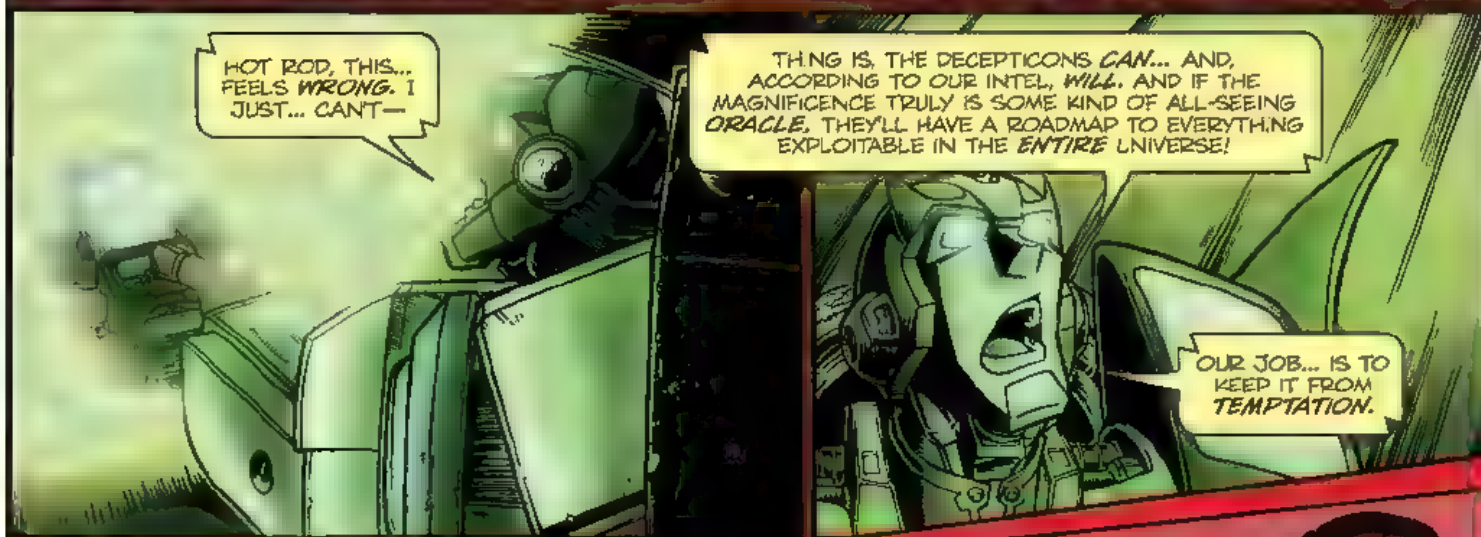
WELL, WE'VE  
REACHED THE  
INNER CHAMBER.  
THE REST,  
DOWNLOAD...





...IS UP TO YOU!

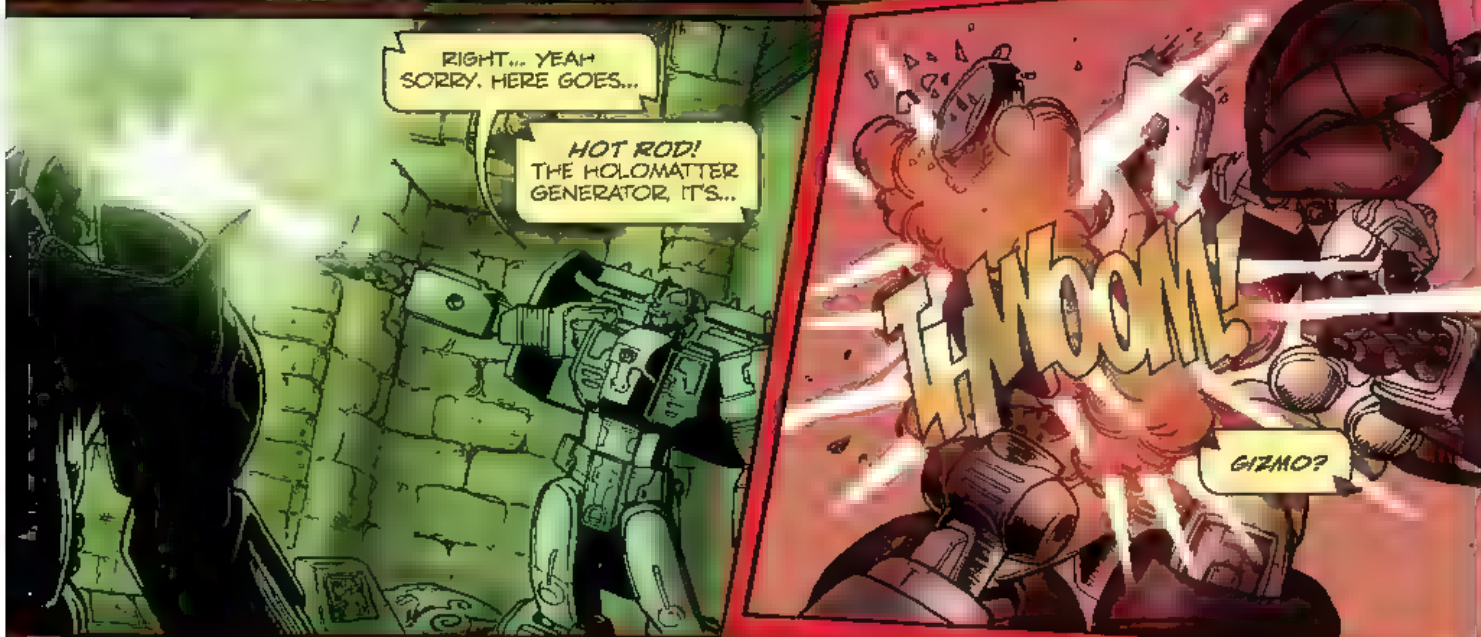
I-I NEVER  
IMAGINED.  
IT'S... WELL,  
MAGNIFICENT.



HOT ROD, THIS...  
FEELS *WRONG*. I  
JUST... CANT—

THING IS, THE DECEPTICONS *CAN*... AND,  
ACCORDING TO OUR INTEL, *WILL*. AND IF THE  
MAGNIFICENCE TRULY IS SOME KIND OF ALL-SEEING  
*ORACLE*, THEY'LL HAVE A ROADMAP TO EVERYTHING  
EXPLOITABLE IN THE *ENTIRE* UNIVERSE!

OUR JOB... IS TO  
KEEP IT FROM  
*TEMPTATION*.



RIGHT... YEAH  
SORRY. HERE GOES...

**HOT ROD!**  
THE HOLOMATTER  
GENERATOR, IT'S...

**BOOM!**

GIZMO?





I'M OKAY. BUT THE  
GENERATOR'S  
TOTALLED! AND...

...WE'VE BEEN  
NOTICED!



GIZMO? GIZMO?

ABORT! I REPEAT,  
ABORT! FALL BACK  
TO THE EVAC  
POSITION—NOW!

IT'S... GOING!  
HOT ROD, THE  
CONTAINMENT FIELD  
IS DOWN! WE...



...DID—

DOWN—



—HIT!

SKRAAAAK!





WAWP - WAWP - WAWP

THE VIRUS POPS EVERY CELL DOOR

THIS IS A  
CODE-NINE. I  
REPEAT...



Z-LATERAL IS QUIET. THE  
COORDINATE EITHER TINA WAD-  
IT'S ANYTHING MORE THAN A  
BOUTLINE SPOT INSPECTION!

FOR JUST TOO WEAK  
OR BROKEN TO TAKE

FROM THE FIGHTING

TO THE FIGHTING

INSTEAD, I FOCUS ON HIM. WHEN WORD FIRST REACHED ME THAT

THEY WERE HERE, I WAS BRINGING

I WAS BRINGING

"DEALER?"



Z  
Z  
A  
K  
T!

Z  
Z  
A  
K  
T!

DEALER? WHAT IS  
YOUR STATUS?

...

DEALER!

ZOW!

I HAVE THE  
OBJECTIVE. IF  
YOU'RE ABLE, GET  
YOURSELF OUT  
OF THERE—NOW!

H-HOT ROD?  
HOT ROD!

TOOM!

I'M PINNED DOWN!  
DECEPTICONS... AN  
ATTACK SQUAD... BEFORE  
I KNEW IT, THEY WERE  
RIGHT ON TOP OF ME!  
HOT ROD...

...HELP!

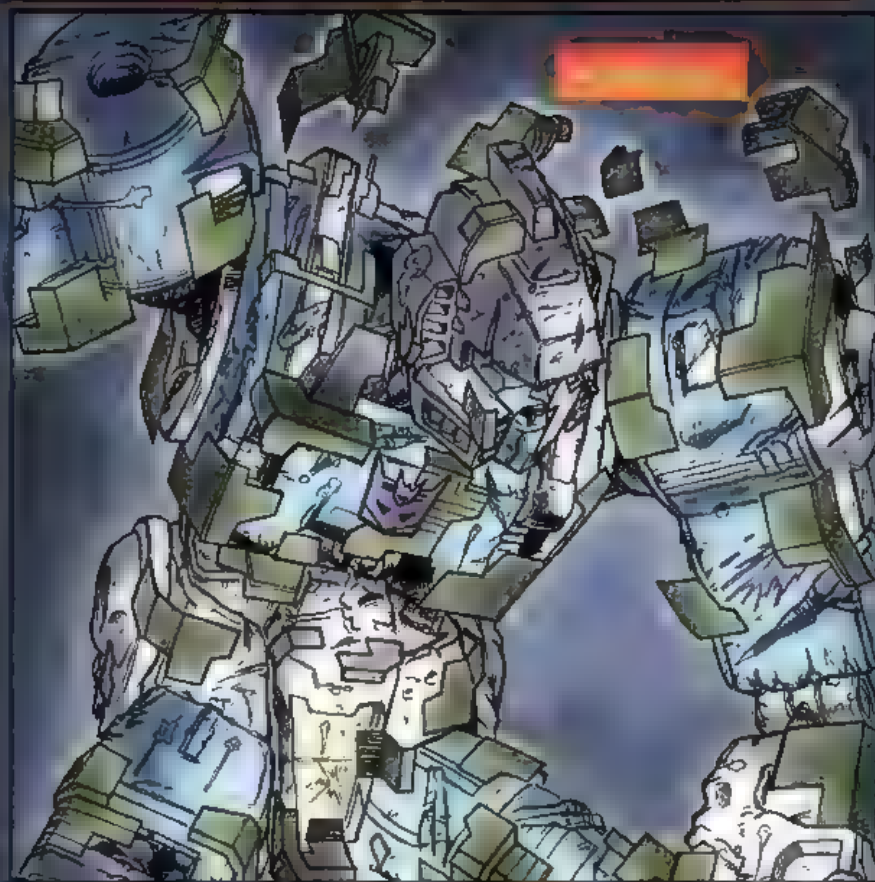
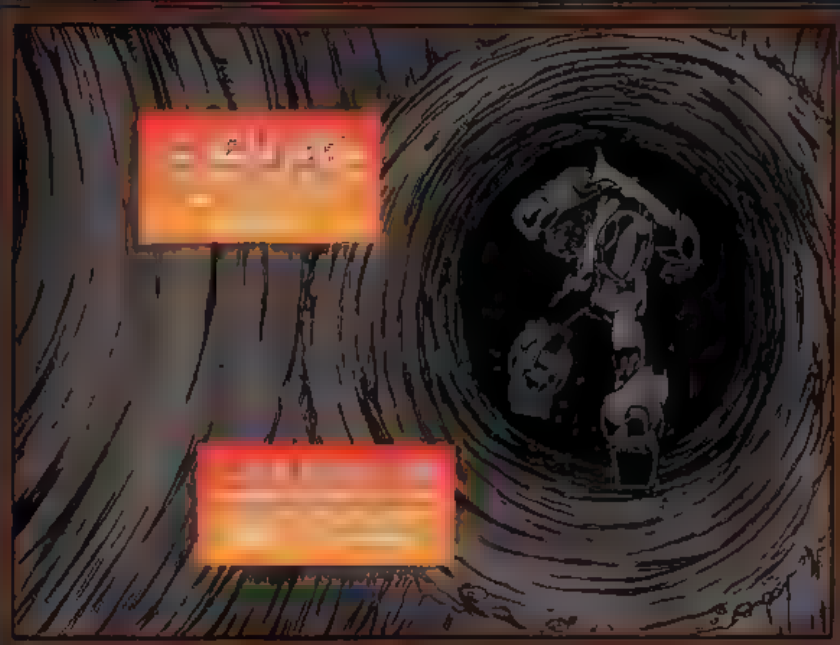
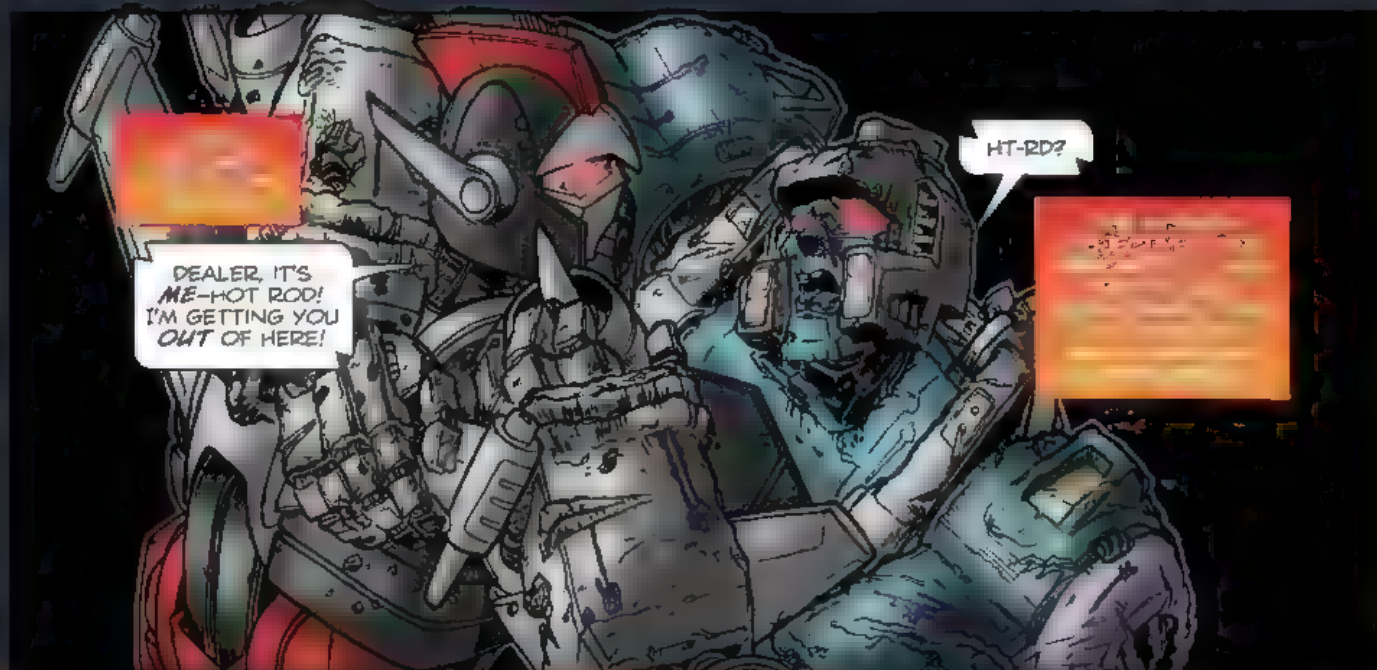
I'M SORRY...

DEALER . I .

...CAN'T...

I HAD MY OWN "OPTICS"  
ONLY "ORDERS, ORDERS"  
THE OTHERS KNEW  
NOTHING ABOUT...







THE OFFICIAL INCIDENT  
INVESTIGATION REPORT  
PUT THE BLAME FIRMLY ON  
AN UNSECURED COMM.  
CHANNEL AND A DEFECTIVE  
HOLOMATTER POWER CELL.

BUT IT WAS MY  
RESPONSIBILITY TO  
DOUBLE-CHECK THE  
MISSION ORDNANCE  
AND SECURITY  
INTERLOCKS.



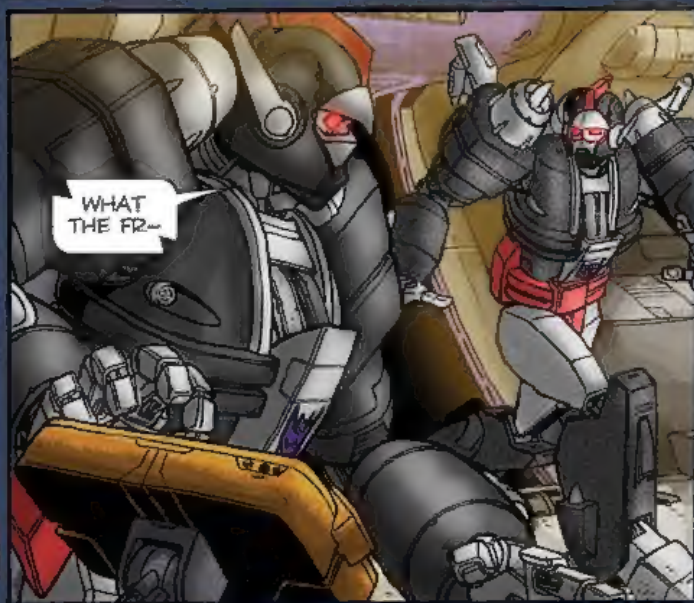
THOUGH NOBODY EVER  
ACTUALLY POINTED THE FINGER...

WAIT HERE...

...THE BUCK STOPPED  
WITH ME.



WHAT  
THE FR--



SURPRISE!







AND IF I THOUGHT THAT,  
SO MUST HAVE OTHERS.

EVERY TIME SINCE, WHENEVER I'VE  
HEADED UP A TACTICAL RESPONSE  
OR FIELD UNIT, I'VE WONDERED...

...DO THEY *TRUST* ME?



DO I *TRUST* MYSELF?



THAT'S WHY, IF IT'S AN  
OPTION, I PREFER TO GO  
*SOLO*. IF I MESS UP, IT'S ME  
PAYS THE PRICE. JUST ME.

BUT IT GETS  
*LONELY*—OUT HERE.



MAYBE, JUST MAYBE...



...I'VE FOUND A  
WAY *BACK*.





DEALER'S *OUT* OF IT FOR THE WHOLE  
RETURN JOURNEY. IT ISN'T UNTIL  
NEARLY A DECA-CYCLE LATER...

...THAT I GET TO  
SAY MY PIECE.

UM...

I'M  
WELL....

YOU  
SEE...

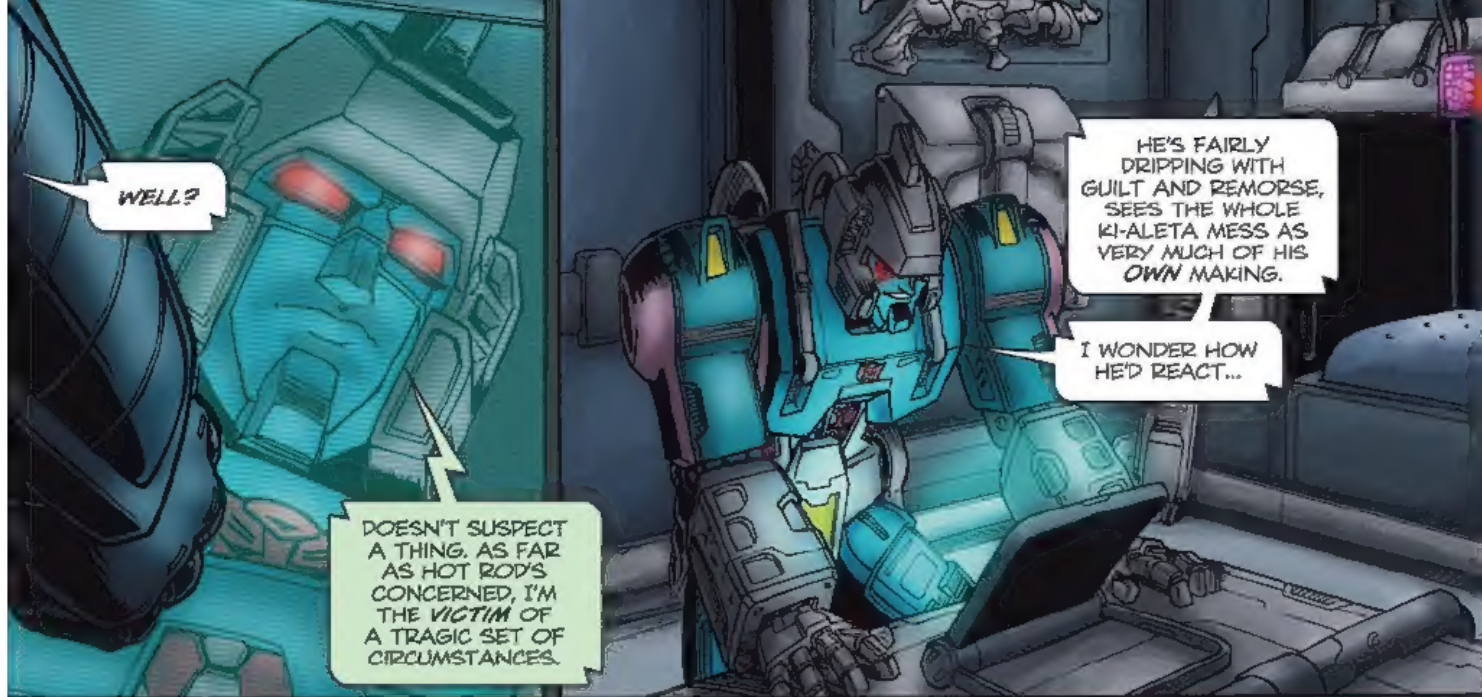
HOT  
ROD...

...IT'S ALRIGHT.  
REALLY. IN YOUR  
POSITION... I'D HAVE  
DONE THE EXACT  
SAME THING.

THANK YOU FOR  
COMING BACK FOR ME,  
FOR RISKING SO MUCH. IT  
MEANS, WELL, EVERYTHING.  
WHAT I'D LIKE, MORE  
THAN ANYTHING...

...IS FOR US TO  
BE FRIENDS!



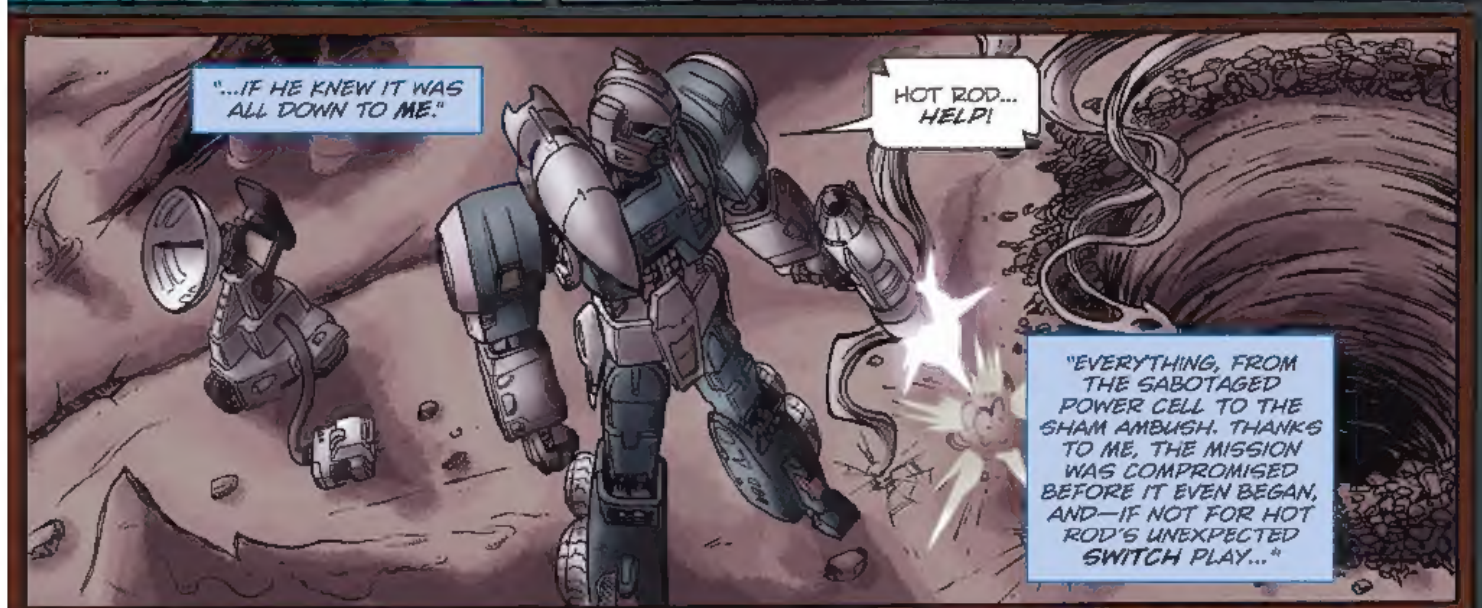


WELL?

DOESN'T SUSPECT A THING. AS FAR AS HOT ROD'S CONCERNED, I'M THE VICTIM OF A TRAGIC SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

HE'S FAIRLY DRIPPING WITH GUILT AND REMORSE, SEES THE WHOLE KI-ALETA MESS AS VERY MUCH OF HIS OWN MAKING.

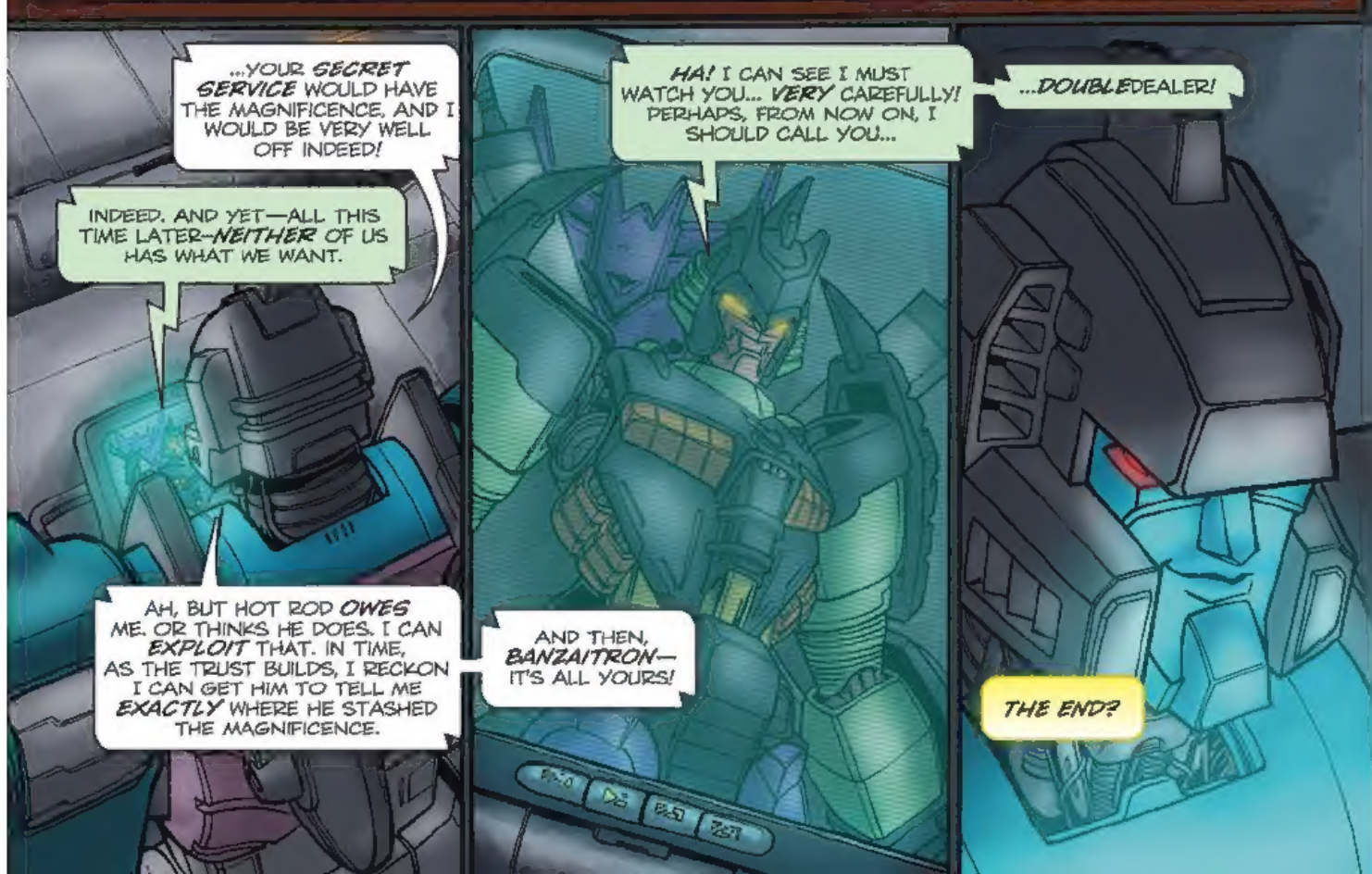
I WONDER HOW HE'D REACT...



"...IF HE KNEW IT WAS ALL DOWN TO ME."

HOT ROD...  
HELP!

"EVERYTHING, FROM THE SABOTAGED POWER CELL TO THE SHAM AMBUSH. THANKS TO ME, THE MISSION WAS COMPROMISED BEFORE IT EVEN BEGAN, AND—IF NOT FOR HOT ROD'S UNEXPECTED SWITCH PLAY..."



...YOUR **SECRET SERVICE** WOULD HAVE THE MAGNIFICENCE, AND I WOULD BE VERY WELL OFF INDEED!

INDEED. AND YET—ALL THIS TIME LATER—NEITHER OF US HAS WHAT WE WANT.

AH, BUT HOT ROD OWES ME. OR THINKS HE DOES. I CAN **EXPLOIT** THAT. IN TIME, AS THE TRUST BUILDS, I RECKON I CAN GET HIM TO TELL ME **EXACTLY** WHERE HE STASHED THE MAGNIFICENCE.

HA! I CAN SEE I MUST WATCH YOU... **VERY CAREFULLY!** PERHAPS, FROM NOW ON, I SHOULD CALL YOU...

AND THEN, **BANZAITRON**—IT'S ALL YOURS!

...**DOUBLEDEALER!**

THE END?